



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Russian Refusal of Entry to OSCE Employee

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 23, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On January 7, Meaghan Fitzgerald, a member of the OSCE's mission in Tajikistan, was denied entry into Russia as she sought to transit Moscow on her way to Dushanbe. She was in possession of a United States diplomatic passport and a valid Russian visa. She was provided no explanation and was required to return on the next plane to New York.

Like the Secretariat and the Chair, the United States has raised this matter with the Russian Federation. We have received only a perfunctory explanation, that she was denied entry due to considerations of Russian national security.

We categorically reject the assertion that Ms. Fitzgerald in any way posed or poses a threat to the national security of the Russian Federation.

The United States respects the sovereign right of States to adjudicate the entry of foreign citizens into their territory. Such a right, however, needs to be exercised fairly and judiciously.

Cooperation is a core principle of the OSCE. Unfortunately, we find respect for that principle lacking in the action of Russian authorities to deny Ms. Fitzgerald, without explanation of good cause, the ability to transit Russia as she sought to fulfill her responsibilities as a representative of the OSCE. We look forward to a more substantive explanation from Russian authorities on this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.